

March 11, 2009

Omnibus: Significant Policy Overlooked

WASHINGTON - With all of the hyperventilating over the 1% of the Omnibus appropriations bill that is made up of earmarks, Washington has mostly glossed over the important results it has achieved with the other 99% of the bill.

This bill will make a twenty billion dollar difference in people's lives when compared to President Bush's Budget. Here are some important policy results for the 75% of government programs that were not funded in the Recovery Act that would not have occurred if we had simply acquiesced to the President Bush's budget that cut crucial initiatives.

- Our food and prescription drugs will be safer because of a 19 percent increase to programs at FDA, including significant increases in the number of domestic and foreign food and medical product inspections.

- The Federal Housing Administration won't have to stop issuing mortgages because the bill includes a loan commitment increase. FHA now represents 20% of the total mortgage market.

- 14,000 housing vouchers will be provided to disabled persons and homeless veterans.

- Vocational education programs to prepare workers for good-paying jobs, which Bush proposed to eliminate, are protected with \$1.2 billion in funding.

- Veterans will receive more assistance for employment and training.

- The Commodity Futures Trading Commission will add crucial staff and information technology improvements to protect the integrity of the exchanges with a 30% increase - much needed given the continuing volatility in the energy, agriculture, and financial instruments commodities markets, along with increasing revelations of criminal activity such as Ponzi schemes.

- Social services programs that help assist the most vulnerable with child care and

protective and other critical services during tough economic times, which Bush proposed to eliminate, receive \$1.7 billion.

- 1.7 million disadvantaged children will be served in after-school programs, rejecting cuts to these services proposed by the Bush Administration.

- A new program to expand state health coverage initiatives for the uninsured is funded at \$75 million and an additional \$75 million is provided for State High Risk Insurance Pools, to provide affordable health insurance to almost 200,000 people.

- Approximately 800,000 disadvantaged students are helped to enter and successfully complete college by providing \$848 million for the TRIO programs.

- 473,000 elderly, women, infants and children will be able to keep their supplemental food assistance, which President Bush would have eliminated.

- More aviation inspectors will be hired to keep our aviation system safe.

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